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ABSTRACT

Naturalistic impromptu speech is difficult for researchers to analyze because it is difficult to observe. Further, it is impossible to create two similar communicative situations across languages for contrastive analysis. The experimental compromise is the extension of traditional contrastive methodology from elements of grammar to elements of discourse. The technique serves the important function of giving information about the ways in which the two languages are used in communicative situations. The use of this approach in a Finnish-English cross-language project suggests that while it is promising, a more refined research methodology is needed. Particular attention must be given to scripts and plans, which may reveal cultural differences. Nonverbal aspects, including pauses and hesitation phenomena, may reveal important differences in the ways in which speakers belonging to two different language communities deal with discourse data. (MSE)

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CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS AND IMPROMPTU SPEECH

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Contrastive analysis and impromptu speech

Contrastive analysis

The history of contrastive analysis is an interesting mixture of high hopes, severe refutations, and persistent search for possible solutions of various theoretical problems. To date, after thirty years of massive and wide-ranging research within the CA paradigm, the number of applications is very small indeed. Jacek Fisiak (1980) points out that doubt concerning the validity and usefulness of contrastive studies "results from a number of misunderstandings and misinterpretations created by such factors as the peculiar methodological status of CS, the lack of clearcut distinction in the past between theoretical and applied CS...and the lack of a precise formulation of the different aims of theoretical CS and applied CS as well as the confusion of the relationship between CS, the psycholinguistic theory of interference and errors, and the theory of second language learning."

The distinction between theoretical contrastive studies and applied contrastive studies is of particular importance. Theoretical contrastive studies serve, similarly to studies in any single language, the purpose of adding to our knowledge of the languages concerned, languages in general, or linguistics without any objectives beyond the theoretical aim. Applied contrastive studies are carried out to solve a problem which is, in most cases, language-external, either in the language user or in the society around him.

The problems in contrastive linguistics centre on a certain number of major issues:

(1) *the theory and methodology of CA* (see Sajavaara 1977) as relates to translation equivalence, theory of transfer, the idea of the independence of descriptions, the abstractness of the analysis, and the static nature of the analysis.

(2) *conceptualization of applied linguistics.* Theoretical issues *may*, and often *do*, result in knowledge that is applicable to practical ends, but this

does not mean that all theoretical studies automatically yield applications. Applied linguistics, and applied contrastive studies, should be problem-oriented. This implies, eg., that expansion of traditional linguistics to text and discourse – including impromptu speech – is not a true solution to the dilemma of CA.

(3) *conceptualization of linguistics.* Language has usually been equated with the grammar of the language concerned, and inferences have been made for the purposes of language teaching, for instance, as if the use of a language were restricted to the use of its grammar. Grammatical competence is highly insufficient to explain phenomena involved in language behaviour; categories abstracted for linguistic analysis are not necessarily categories that make part of processes in human speech communication. Linguistic theory has been a rather meagre substitute for an overall theory of human communication in interactional situations.

(4) *conceptualization of language learning.* For the purposes of problem-oriented CA, a language learning theory is needed which could explain the major processes involved. There is no such theory at the moment, nor is there a consistent learning theory that could be used as the basis of such a language learning theory. As far as these questions are concerned, we are, I think, at the threshold of a very exciting period. Particular attention should be called to individual differences in learning, and in language learning in particular. Not all people learn the same way in all contexts. In such research, proper attention should be paid to differences revealed by the context, the learning process proper, the input provided, and the final product of the learning process. Weaknesses in our view of language contrasts as derived from the learning theory are very evident, for instance, in the discussion concerning transfer.

(5) *conceptualization of language teaching.* This is linked with what has been said above about language learning. Language teaching has been strongly teacher-oriented, and what goes on in the learner has been seriously neglected. Learner *products* have been the major concern.

Most of the discussion of the theory of contrastive linguistics has centred on the problem of equivalence. It is self-evident that equivalence figures high in the list of priorities for a contrastive analyst, but CA has been handicapped by the fact that equivalence has been mostly considered within the frame-

work of certain particular grammatical models as applied to the description of a certain pair of languages. The methodology applied has mostly been, accordingly, a description of similar elements in two language codes and their juxtaposition. This type of research is insufficient for the purposes of *applied* contrastive analysis. This is not to say that it is irrelevant or unnecessary: the information available about distinctive elements in the languages studied may be of significance for a deeper CA which goes beyond the codes to various processes involved in the production and reception of messages. Structural contrastive analysis *may* provide us with important tools when we are trying to crack certain cross-linguistic problems lying at deeper levels.

Communicative framework

A communicative situation requires at least two participants in a certain setting. The participating individuals bring a certain number of elements into the situation which cannot be excluded if we are to deal with impromptu speech. We have enough past examples of the exclusion of important parameters through the idealization of the data required by the theoretical framework. An individual has always a goal of some sort and, to reach this goal, he makes use of certain processing heuristics, ie. a kind of script or schema, based on his earlier experience with similar situations plus certain practical means available to him in the particular situation concerned.

The speaker-hearer's behaviour is affected, to a great deal, by a number of speaker-internal factors. These include the speaker-hearer's will and intention, his needs, various emotive and affective variables (which may have an important function in the retrieval of knowledge from the memory base), performance potential, level of consciousness, processing load, etc. Some of these speaker-internal factors are open to interference from a speaker-external source, for instance, the other participants in the situation and the external manifestations of their speaker-internal factors (ie. their goals, needs and intentions), the time available, the setting including aspects such as discourse history and simultaneous events, and the participants' common history and shared/expected knowledge.

The practical means consists of more or less automated processes/programmes and various kinds of strategies. The borderline between processes

and strategies could be drawn between subconscious and conscious ways of carrying out various tasks of communication, but it seems that this kind of borderline can never be strict (cf. Faerch and Kasper 1980). Faerch and Kasper, for instance, say: "strategies are *employed* by the individual (agentiveness), in opposition to processes, which *take place* in the individual". This distinction has some important consequences for applied contrastive analysis, which aims, for instance, at the treatment of second language speech processing. If strategies involve conscious procedures from the part of the speaker, such procedures can also be interfered with directly; they can be manipulated by means of overt teaching. The same is not true of processes: overt manipulation is not possible because only the products of processes are open to conscious examination, and therefore indirect methodology is required to make adjustments in them.

Language use should necessarily be observed against the dynamism of the processes and strategies of human interaction. In situations of language use, the participants themselves construct, or create, the ingredients of communicative success. The building blocks, eg. the elements of the language code, are common to all those who know the language, but to a great extent the way in which the blocks are used is recreated in each individual situation afresh. Most human interactional situations cannot be described in terms of passive automata, the role of the participants is very highly active and involves various problem-solving strategies simultaneously with various strategies and tactics used to deal with problems in communication and interaction.

Speech can be characterized as an intersection of a number of continua. In his paper Jaakko Lehtonen presents a number of parameters which make part of such continua. In the event of a minimum of, or zero, planning, the speaker can be expected to rely on scripts, schemata, and prefabricated plans or apply certain ad hoc problem-solving strategies to deal with the requirements of the situation. Two situational continua which may be of importance for the analysis of impromptu speech could be discussed in this context. One is intentionality. If communicative signals are described as intentional from the part of the speaker and thus involving a choice by him, intentional impromptu speech can be expected to be rather rare, and the impromptuness of impromptu speech decreases with the increase of intentionality. A great deal of impromptu speech is evidently only informative: it is significant for the hearer, while the speaker has no chance to make any communicative choices.

The other factor is shared past experience by the participants in the speech situation. If the interactants share a great deal of common past experience, the speakers have less need to fill the channel with speech that is not communicative. Whenever such a need arises, it normally reflects certain problems in mutual intentions. In situations with the participants having a great deal of shared experience, the incentive for impromptu speech often comes from factors external to the original speech situation.

It seems to be very difficult to define the criteria for impromptu speech in terms of factors relating to speech proper. A good candidate for a definition is perhaps the speech situation itself: impromptu speech could perhaps best be described as speech arising in a certain type of situation.

So far, linguists have not paid enough attention to various socio-psychological aspects of language and language use. Speech communication has been abstracted from its proper context of human interaction. It is only rarely that naturalistic data from speech situations resembles laundered material of the kind that is often found in many linguistic representations of interactional communication. Problems may arise for a multitude of reasons. The speaker may have to interrupt the ongoing procedures as a result of the listener's reactions, he may realize that his plan has been wrong, the reactions of the listener imply that his interpretation of the message has not been what was planned, simultaneous events make it necessary for him to interrupt his speech, or the original message is abandoned in view of the developments in the situation.

In most cases, it is impossible, on the basis of the final product, to see if it really represents the original intention or if it is either formally or content-wise reduced or adjusted (cf. Faerch and Kasper 1980).

In true communicative situations, and I assume on the basis of what was said above that impromptu speech is not usually communicative in this sense, the speaker formulates his message on the basis of what he thinks the listener knows, believes, and thinks, the listener's assumed attitudes and feelings; the listener's reactions to his speech; mutual agreement or disagreement on attitudes and opinions; and shared and expected information. The participants mostly start from the principle that they want, or do not want, to communicate something, and thus their behaviour reflects their willingness, or unwillingness, to understand each other. In an impromptu speech situation it is to be expected that the degree of impromptu character of speech decreases with the progress of the communicative situation.

Most communication, impromptu speech included, works with approximations. Most final messages are only pale reflections of intentions, and normally there is no way of knowing whether the hearer's interpretation of what the speaker says is what was intended by the speaker (a fine illustration of this is given by Ogden and Richards in their list of meanings). The models of communication which represent human interactional communication by means of models in which reception is a mirror image of production are highly defective and insufficient for this purpose. Both parties are faced with a problem of reaching agreement: the speaker is supposed to give enough cues, verbal and non-verbal, for the hearer to be able to construct a model of what is being intended. The hearer is an active participant: he makes use of the cues transmitted by the speaker and correlates them to other parameters, some of which are listed above, to create the most probable interpretation of the intended message. What goes on creates several consecutive cycles.

The processing system

The Finnish-English Cross-Language Project applies the following principles to the study of cross-linguistic phenomena:

(1) Representations of grammars that are available are not psycholinguistically real, they do not represent processes involved in the production and reception of messages.

(2) Processes of production and reception must be described communicatively (see Sajavaara and Lehtonen 1980). Grammatical rules are regular structures of language which function as constraints. They are not models for mental processes. A communicative, dynamic model describes how the speaker implements his communicative intentions and how the hearer deciphers the speaker's intentions.

(3) Communicative interaction has a purpose which is mostly language-external. People do not interact to produce utterances but to serve purposes that are outside language.

(4) Production and reception are creative processes, and in natural situations of language use the reception of messages is seldom possible on the basis of the input signal alone. Utterances are not usually planned as entities:

the opening is normally cued by the previous utterance or language-external phenomena in the situation.

(5) Human information processing requires a processing model that is heterarchical (see Sajavaara and Lehtonen 1980). Processing takes place in real time, and a time-sharing system is needed to explain the phenomena involved. Linguistic information is of equal value with non-linguistic information for the purposes of interpretation.

(6) The primary process is top-down, ie. knowledge-driven, but it is simultaneous with the secondary, bottom-up, input-driven analysis (Lindsay and Norman 1977:278ff.).

(7) Lexical items serve a function which may be of greater importance than that of grammar. Lexical items are intersections of various types of information about their use in utterances; this information includes that about grammatical, semantic and pragmatic constraints as well as that about frequent word combinations, prefabricated phrases, etc. (see Morton 1979). Lexical items carry an important part of the semantic structure of the utterance, and they activate various processing procedures in reception and production.

(8) Speech perception is based on identification derived directly from cue features constituting the 'Gestalt' of lexical items. A phoneme identification process, which is available simultaneously to the direct identification process, is only resorted to in cases of failure to identify elements directly, ie. when for instance the cues available match no item in the data base. Both of the two channels are open all the time, but phonological identification is only an auxiliary strategy that is activated exceptionally.

The methodology of contrastive analysis

The traditional methodology of contrastive analysis is based on the isolation of rules and structures in the languages under scrutiny and their comparison mostly in view of the equivalence criterion. Such contrastive analysis adds, as was pointed out above, to the existing body of knowledge about the languages concerned or about language in general, but it does not necessarily serve purposes outside linguistics such as language teaching, the way CA was originally expected to do. A different approach is needed based on a communicative principle.

The introduction of the communicative framework means the introduction of contrastive discourse analysis. Contrasting of structures in laboratory conditions is not sufficient: the contrastive methodology applied should be adequate to cope with all parameters of communication which make it possible or impossible for the participants to understand messages. In this sense, traditional contrastive analysis has been both too simple and too complicated, too simple through the fact that it has mostly been constrained to elements in the language code, too complicated in that it has been assumed that all the levels covered by linguistic analysis have been constantly activated. What has been said above implies that, in addition to various linguistic parameters, attention will have to be paid to those that are psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic. The psycholinguistic contrast takes place in the 'mind' of the speaker, and therefore naturalistic data are needed from various types of language-use situations.

The real contrast takes place in the learner. Therefore the Finnish-English Cross-Language Project has seen it necessary to study the interaction between a Finnish speaker of English and a native speaker. Attention has been paid to factors that make it possible for the Finn to understand messages in English and to make himself understood (Sajavaara and Lehtonen 1980b, Sajavaara and Lehtonen (ed.) 1980). A careful comparison is needed of Finnish and native English speech and of communicative behaviour in both Finnish and English by the same Finnish informants.

Impromptu speech and CA

Pure impromptu speech poses a problem to the researcher, because observation of naturalistic impromptu speech is not easy. Moreover, it is more or less impossible to create two similar communicative situations cross-linguistically for contrastive purposes. Thus, the type of study which seems to be possible experimentally is the extension of traditional contrastive methodology from elements of grammar to elements of discourse.

One of the most interesting 'contrastive' problems seems to be the existence of scripts to deal with certain types of situations. Such scripts are known to be heavily culture-bound, which raises interesting problems of a contrastive nature within an expanded framework of cross-language communication analysis.

Within the Finnish-English Cross-Language Project, aspects of contrastive discourse analysis were taken up by Ventola (1980). Her data were based on audiotaped casual conversations in Finland and Australia, and she was concerned with conversation management devices. A great deal of her material comes as close to impromptu speech as is normally possible. The study is not contrastive discourse analysis exactly in the sense in which it has been presented above, but it gives important insights into how certain aspects of casual conversation are structured in English and Finnish and what sort of devices are used by the interactants in certain phases of interactional discourse to serve certain conversational functions. Her data indicate, for instance, that "the Finns were more concerned about emphasizing and making their point clear when constructing their move, while the English speakers paid more attention to expressing their ideas tentatively – it could perhaps be said that they avoided presenting 'attacking' opinions" (Ventola 1980:134). Moreover, the English speakers seem to pay more attention to their interlocutors' reactions to their speech: they wanted to make sure that the interlocutors understood the moves, while the Finns were more concerned with clarifications. The Finns also seemed to rely more on shared information. Ventola's data also shows that the communication management devices used to structure discourse were to a great extent similar in both of the two languages. The English speakers' feedback moves were slightly more frequent than those of the Finnish speakers.

The Finnish project has also included studies in discourse management devices, both verbal and non-verbal, in seminar settings. Most of the speech situations like these cannot be described as impromptu, but a great deal of the information can be used as a background for a study of impromptu speech (see Saario 1980, Valokorpi 1980). In particular, features that seem to be of some relevance include various avoidance strategies and the way in which various linguistic and non-linguistic elements combine in communicative situations. It was seen, for instance, that Finnish speakers of English relied almost entirely on the verbal means to convey their meanings (Saario 1980.74), but on the whole the speakers who were more communicative and more 'proficient' in their Finnish were also so in English. For the most part, no greater differences were observed in communicative devices between Finnish and English. What there was there that was different can easily be explained as resulting from differences in the roles of the two groups of

speakers: the native speakers of English were teachers, and the Finns were students.

Most of the discourse material is experimental. It is clearly task-oriented and thus highly intentional. Yet in discussions of this type there are phases where the interactants lapse into small talk, eg. when the task demands override the available potential, when something goes wrong, and when the interactants feel that they require a break. This type of impromptu speech is impossible in highly formal situations.

On the basis of the material that is available it seems that in impromptu speech situations the speakers have to rely either on various types of conversational routines or on prefabricated expressions, which require a minimum of processing capacity. Such routines seem to serve the function in several instances of reducing the processing load required for speech performance to give the speaker more time to think about the consequences of his interactant's move and to develop an adequate strategy to deal with the situation. Impromptu speech also serves the well-known function of gathering more information about the parameters relevant for the continuation of the interactional situation, more information about the other interactants, their background, the situation, etc. Otherwise the discourse remains either heavily verbally-oriented or phatic communion with zero content.

It is obvious that we need a more refined research methodology to deal with impromptu speech. The studies carried out by the Finnish project imply that experimental techniques are not totally out of place. A good candidate for the material collection technique is role play and drama.

Concluding remark

Contrastive studies in impromptu speech in two languages serve the important function of giving information about the ways in which the two language are used in communicative situations. Particular attention should be called to scripts and plans, which may reveal cultural differences. Nonverbal aspects, including pauses and hesitation phenomena, may reveal important differences in the ways in which speakers belonging to two different language communities deal with discourse data.

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